

Development of the Caltrans Re-Vegetation Program in Northern California

Background and History

The Caltrans Re-vegetation Program is comprised of several Caltrans offices in conjunction with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and other government and environmental agencies. The area covered by the program comprises 22 northern California counties.

The program evolved as a result of several issues facing Caltrans:

- Lack of flexibility in Caltrans' construction contract timetables due to climate.
- High cost of plant establishment in construction contracts.
- Low success rates of plant establishment in construction contracts.
- Lack of ability to meet local agency requirements and requests.

The program was first started in the spring of 1999 with one person and has expanded to four full time and two part time employees.

The mission of the re-vegetation program is to allow Caltrans to comply with state and federal environmental regulations at minimal cost and maximum effectiveness through the use of low cost labor, locally acquired materials and proper timing.



California Conservation Corps members.

Innovation and Significance

The re-vegetation program allows Caltrans to augment the regular statewide bidding system to complete its mission. The options of using locally written small business contracts, CCC interagency agreements or utilizing local nurseries and schools has many benefits:

- Plant establishment times are reduced or eliminated.
- Costs are reduced by as much as 60%.
- Allows the use of specialty or small quantity items.
- Ensures adequate quality control.
- Creates the flexibility to meet environmental timeframes.

Overall, it provides for quick project turnaround as there are no formal plans or specifications. There is no office engineer or headquarters review, nor are there separate environmental or right of way reviews. Projects can be completed in days that would normally require three years.

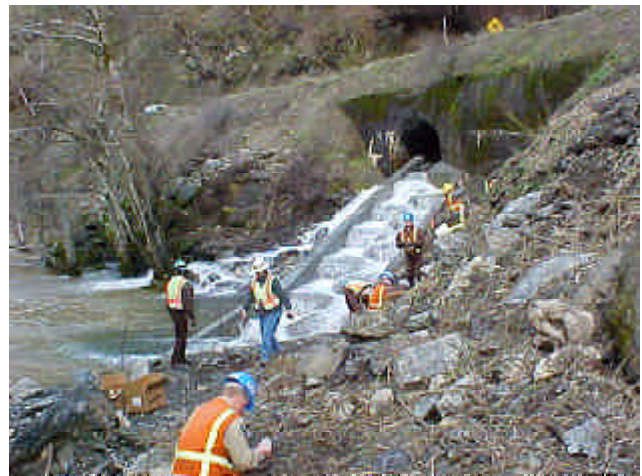
Partnering and Collaboration

Caltrans utilizes the CCC's in accordance with California Public Resource Code 14000. By doing so, it creates an opportunity for the youth of our communities to participate in a unique program that "builds character, self-esteem and self-discipline as well as establishing a strong sense of civic responsibility and understanding of the value of a day's work for a day's wages".

In addition, establishment of relationships with government and regulatory agencies is much easier facilitated than if done through main construction contracts. As a result, Caltrans is now viewed as a participant in environmental issues at a local level.



Fish Ladder (Before)



Fish Ladder (After)

The Little French Creek Fish Ladder was a joint project between Caltrans and the Dept. of Fish and Game. The original ladder was no longer functional and was replaced with a new one anchored in bedrock.

After a two year planting effort, with watering and maintenance performed by the CCC, the vegetation has matured to the point where it has reached roadway height.

Integration for Decision-Making

The Caltrans program has the ability to set the standards for re-vegetation as it is in the unique position of being involved with construction projects at federal, state and local levels.

Caltrans serves as a conduit between normally unassociated agencies and is in the position to acquire future environmental permits.

Results and Transferability

In the program's 10 years it has been actively involved in over 300 projects varying in cost from \$5,000 to \$1,000,000.

It has proven a reliable customer for the CCC's and local vendors and is easily transferable nationwide at the state level.



Cedar Creek (Before)



Cedar Creek (After)

During the Cedar Creek highway shoulder project the streambed was temporarily moved then rebuilt and replanted. However, the replanting occurred in August and most of the plants died.

After construction Caltrans hired the CCC to replant in late fall, the result being a well established streambed after three years.

